

 Congressman Gil Gutknecht, First District, Minnesota

DEFENDING FREEDOM. SECURING OUR FUTURE.



G A SPECIAL THANK YOU g

Our country has renewed her spirit of patriotism and pride. We have always been mindful of the debt we owe to our nation's veterans and military personnel. Now more than ever, we are called to remember, and to give thanks, for these brave Americans. Congress has provided updated services and benefits to current and retired military.

If we are going to send our troops into harm's way throughout the world, we must make sure they

have the best training and equipment possible. And, when their service is complete, we must fulfill our obligation to them as

veterans of the greatest military in the world.

I remain forever grateful to our veterans and to those who are proudly serving the U.S. today.

Freedom is not a right that can be usurped by tyrannical leaders. It is a divine right that belongs to all people. Thank you for your service and God bless America.



G SERVICE ACADEMIES g

Applications are now being accepted for nominations to the four U.S. Service Academies: *the U.S. Air Force Academy, the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, the U.S. Military Academy, and the U.S. Naval Academy.*

Applicants must be unmarried U.S. citizens with no legal dependents, residents of the First District, and at least 17 years of age but not past their 23rd birthday on July 1, 2003. Full application requirements are available through my Rochester office (800-862-8632).

Minnesota: 1530 Greenview Dr. SW #108 Rochester, MN 55902 (800) 862-8632

G FROM WASHINGTON g

This year we've approved a record amount for the **Veterans Affairs (VA) budget**, including a 12% increase focused on health care benefits. We doubled what the Administration proposed, but *did not* include the proposed \$1,500 deductible for Priority 7 veterans. This would have required veterans without service-connected disabilities pay a new \$1,500 annual deductible in order to receive VA in-patient health care. This just wouldn't have been fair.

Our National Defense bill accounts for a 5-year phase-in of full **concurrent receipt** for those veterans with a disability rating of 60% or higher. This increases the military benefits a veteran can collect without offset from VA disability compensation.



VETERANS CABLE SHOW

Congressman Gutknecht recently discussed VA budget issues with Deputy Secretary Leo Mackay of the Department of Veterans Affairs. This show is on your local cable channel now. Be sure to visit www.gil.house.gov for station times and information.

The VA has announced the consolidation of **Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISN)**

13 and 14 into the new VISN 23, which will be headquartered in Minneapolis. It will provide service to Minnesota, South Dakota, North Dakota, Iowa, Nebraska, and portions of Illinois, Wisconsin, Kansas, and Missouri. This merger will create efficiencies by reducing administration overhead and eliminating duplicated services. Please know, however, that services will remain at the same level with this new consolidation plan.

President Bush also recently signed into law legislation to increase educational, housing, burial and disability benefits, including a record 46 percent increase in GI benefits.

Washington: 425 Cannon House Office Bldg. Washington, DC 20515 (202) 225-2472

G FROM MINNESOTA g

In Winona, I recently participated in the **land transfer ceremony** between the U.S. Army Reserve and Winona State University. The former Reserve property will now be home to about 300 students. This transfer was the result of many local efforts and will be a big help to the ever-growing university.

In Mankato, progress continues on the National Guard's **Training and Community Center**. Completion of the facility is scheduled for October. The building will have space for National Guard training and other community activities, such as community meetings, conferences, trade shows, and more.



TRANSFER CEREMONY

Displaying the transfer deed are (l to r) Congressman Gutknecht, Mike Spelt, president of the WSU Foundation, and Col. Edward J. Binseel, Deputy Chief of Staff Engineer, US Army Reserve.

The Department of Veterans Affairs has opened its new **Community Based Outpatient Clinic** for southeastern Minnesota. It is located at 1617 Skyline Drive in Rochester. You may reach the clinic directly at (507) 252-0885.

This clinic is for outpatient procedures only. Veterans also must receive approval to enroll, which can be obtained by calling the clinic.

Lastly, if you are having problems with a federal agency, such as the Department of Veterans Affairs, remember to contact my Rochester office directly at **(800) 862-8632**. My staff stands ready to help answer your questions!

Website: www.gil.house.gov **E-Mail:** gil@mail.house.gov

G NORMANDY MEDALS g

The Normandy Medal of the Jubilee of Liberty is available to honor those veterans who risked their lives for freedom between June 6, 1944, and August 31, 1944, in the Normandy invasion. The Medal was minted for presentation to those Normandy veterans who returned to France for the 50th anniversary of the landing in 1994. The Governor of the Normandy Region has authorized that the Medal may be presented to those who were unable to attend the anniversary celebration.

Please call my Rochester office at 800-862-8632 to get an application.

The medals will be presented later this year.

“Those men of Normandy were men of great faith. They had faith that what they were doing was right, faith that they fought for all humanity, faith that a just God would grant them mercy on this beachhead or on the next. They knew word of the invasion was spreading through the darkness back home. They felt in their hearts that in Georgia they were filling the churches at 4:00am, in Kansas they were kneeling on their porches and praying, and in Philadelphia they were ringing the Liberty Bell.”

-President Ronald Reagan

Don't forget the E-Line!

Visit **www.gil.house.gov** today for your complimentary copy of my weekly wrap-up of activities in Washington and Minnesota.



"Never before in American history has our nation been so completely unified and resolute in purpose. Every one of them is cheering us on, praying for our safety and our success. Our families are behind us 100 percent.

We will not let them down. We are, and we will be, men and women on honor, courage, and commitment.

I believe, as Abraham Lincoln said, that 'America is the last, best hope for the world.'

Tonight we hold a shining beacon of that hope. We shall keep it burning brightly."

-Excerpt from the words of Captain Ronald H. Henderson, Jr., commanding officer of the USS John F. Kennedy, just before the JFK launched her first strikes into Afghanistan.



**C O N G R E S S M A N
G I L G U T K N E C H T**
Congress of the United States
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

PUBLIC DOCUMENT

*This mailing was prepared,
published, and mailed
at taxpayer expense.*

Gil Gutknecht
M.C.

PRESORTED STANDARD



Printed on recycled paper
with soybean-based ink.